MATERIAL CULTURE

Dwellings

The sides of the Yakut winter dwelling are occupied by wide wooden banks called *oron* (bank) or *olox* (seat). The northeastern corner (Fig. 19), where a door or an uncovered entrance leads to the cattle stalls and the other small corners, has no banks. The names of the banks and their uses are of considerable ethnographical interest. The entrance to the Yakut dwelling always faces east, the seat of benevolent deities. The bank directly to the left of the entrance has no name and is designed for household objects. Sometimes there is no bank at all at this point. On the plan illustrated (Fig. 19) Nos. 1 and 3 are called the right side of the dwelling, i.e., facing outward to the entrance. No. 1 is called *atax oron* (the first bank) or *āna suol oron* (the bank by the door). Its ancient name was *kōñūl olox* (the free seat). This seat is for unimportant, impoverished visitors, and serves as a sleeping place for male laborers. In the Kolyma District, during the marriage feast, the bridegroom sits in this place with his back to the banqueting guests.

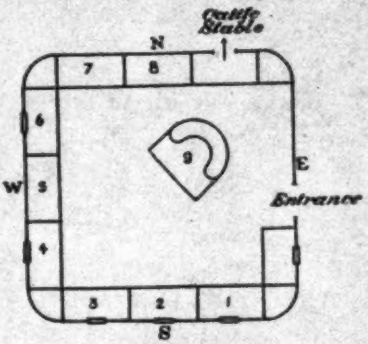

Fig. 19. Groundplan of a Yakut Hut, showing the Position of the Banks, Windows, and Entrance.

No. 2 is called *ortuku uña oron* (the right middle bank), *tūnnūxtax oron* (bank near the window), or *orto olox* (the middle seat). The last is the most ancient name. The designation for No. 2 is the same as for No. 1. When a son-in-law visits his bride in the house of her parents before the *kalym* (bride-price) has been paid, No. 2 is assigned to the couple as a sleeping place.

No. 3 is called *billirik*. It is regarded as the best, most comfortable, and warmest seat and sleeping place in the Yakut hut. Usually there is no window over this bank, although in the sketch a window is shown. The most honored guests or the shaman invited for a performance is seated there. During a wedding the parents of the bridegroom, relatives, and the matchmakers, and other members of the wedding party have this place. The *billirik* is also known under the following names: *tūspediyér olox*, *ulūtuyar olox*, or *tūs olox*.

No. 4 is called *bastyñ uña oron* (the right first bank). According to Sieroszevski this position carries less honor than the *billirik;* it is less

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

comfortable, has a window above it, and is within the range of the cold wind from the open entrance door. During a wedding it is occupied by the owners of the house and their nearest relatives; here also are seated honored guests when the *billirik* is already occupied. The *billirik* and the *bastyñ uña oron* form the "venerable corner." There a table stands, over which, under the ceiling, is a small carved and decorated shelf, called *holloruk*, on which are icons and images of saints painted on boards, to which wax candles, decorated with ribbons, beads, and other pendants, are affixed; or an embellished oil lamp is hung in front of the images. There on Sundays and holidays, headed by the hosts, the inmates and guests gather for prayer, so that this corner is transformed into a kind of chapel. During the prayers, the people stand in front or at the rear of the group, in accordance with their age and position in the community. They bow, cross themselves, hold lighted candles, and burn incense. In Fig. 20 may be seen a brass picture of saints fastened to a board surmounted by crosses. The ancient name of the *bastyñ uña oron* was *kōhūl olox*.

No. 5, the bank opposite the fireplace (No. 9) called *kātāharin*, is the family sleeping place above which there is no window.

No. 6, *kănčiărā olox*, is also called *xañas billirik* (left *billirik*) where adult girls (daughters and relatives) sit, work, and sleep. *Kănčiăra-jon* means young people in general.

No. 7 is called *xañas oron*. It serves as a sleeping place for female laborers or servants and grown children of both sexes. On this bank, hidden by a curtain, the bride sits during the three days' wedding festivities.

No. 8 is called *isit oron* (bank for cooking and other household vessels, from *isit*, kitchen ware).

Over Nos. 7 and 8 is usually a shelf called *dolbūr*.

All the banks beyond the *kātāhārīn* are regarded as belonging to the women of the dwelling. When facing the entrance, inside, the male half of the house is to the right and the female half to the left. The *kātāhārīn* (No. 5) or the family sleeping place and all the banks of the female half are supplied with calico (in former times, leather) curtains which are let down during the night.

From the Russians the Yakut adopted the use of tables and tabourets. Illustrations of models of such furniture may be seen in Fig. 21. The table is usually much lower than our tables and the tabouret is as high as the table. The table with refreshments on it is placed before guests sitting on the banks (*oron*) described above. The Yakut name for

[cf. p. 136, category 116 -- ANALYST]

Fig. 38*ab* represents a *sanayax* of foalskins. The *kybytya* on the back is made of a black foalskin. The white stripes on the skirt are of white horse legskins and the black stripes of black cowskin. 292

The Yakut *pestreidax sanayax* (evidently from the Russian word *pestryi*, many colored) (70–8523) is of skins of yearling reindeer fawns. The skirt is trimmed with wolf fur, above which is a decoration made of black and white foalskins. The *kybytya* is made of lynx and wolverene furs.

Another *sanayax* (70–8525) in the collection is of lynx fur; the skirt is trimmed with squirrel tails and the *kybytya* is of land otter. One *sanayax* is of the fur of *tarbagans*.

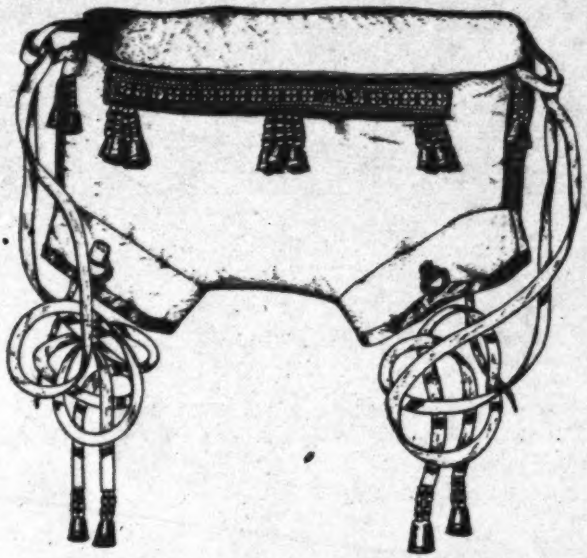

Fig. 39 (70–8724). A Woman's Trousers of curried Elkskin ornamented with Beads and Brass Bells.

Formerly the *sanayax*[1] was worn on the naked body, but now under this fur coat the wealthier Yakut wear Russian shirts of calico or some other cotton material which they call *yrbaxy* (Russian *rubaxa*),—short, to the haunches or knees for men, and long, to the condyles or heels, for women. The woman's long shirt is also called *xaladai*. The Yakut do not wash these shirts. They remove them before going to bed, sleeping under their fur blankets, naked, except for their short trousers of soft, curried reindeer skin called *sarysyalya*. These are worn by men and women alike, and are shaped so that they are higher behind, leaving the abdomen uncovered in front, which deficiency is made up by the wearing of warm stomachers. 513 296 291

1 [Cf. pp. 147–149, Category 116 -- ANALYST]

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

291 177 In addition to the clothing enumerated above, the Yakut sometimes wear a *shiletzik* (Russian *shilet*, waistcoat), *altyc* (Russian *galstux*, cravat), *kufaiky* (Russian *fufaika*, sweater), *plat* (Russian *platok*, handkerchief), etc., which they have adopted from the Russians together with their names.

At home, the Yakut, particularly in the summer or during the winter before the hearth, prefer wearing only short breeches. Women wear their skirts.

276 177 Pipes are of various shapes. The bowl may be of iron, brass, pewter, or bone and the stem often consists of two halves held together by a leather binding. By loosening the leather strip the stem may be cleaned. A tobacco pipe made of mammoth ivory, the bowl and stem being of the same material, is shown in Fig. 44. To diminish the strength of the leaf

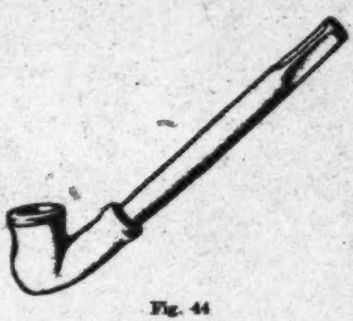

Fig. 44

Fig. 45

Fig. 44 (70-9210). Pipe made of Mammoth Ivory.
Fig. 45 (70-8940). Wooden Snuff Box.

tobacco and also for economy, the Yakut mix it with shredded poplar bark (*tirăx tatyrga*). They also adopted the custom of snuffing tobacco from the Russians. A wooden box for snuff may be seen in Fig. 45.

● 513 Bedding consists of a fur robe (mare, reindeer or bearskin) called *tăllăx* and a blanket, *suorhan*. The blanket is sewed of hares' backs, legs, or heads or of white fox legs and tails. Poor people cover themselves with their fur coats and sleep on grass mats. Pillows are made of calico filled with bird down or feathers. Usually two people sleep under one blanket with their heads in opposite directions. (For the position of [511] sleeping places in the Yakut dwelling see p. 135).[1] A Yakut traveler usually carries his own bedding with him, for even rich people seldom own a sufficient quantity to accommodate transient guests.

152 My observations on the ability of the Yakut to endure severe cold may be of interest on this point. When spending the night in the open

[1] [cf. category 342 -- ANALYST]

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

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Fig. 67 (70-9136). Side View of the Silver-Ornamented Saddle illustrated in Fig. 66.

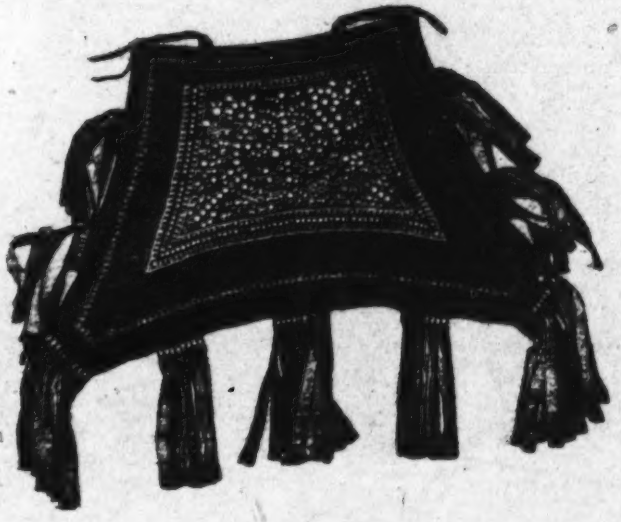

Fig. 68 (70-9138). Silver and Lead Ornamented Saddle Cloth.

16: Great Britain Admiralty --165 [3] G-3 (no date) 1920 Yakut
116, 153, 513, 524

"They are passionately fond of cards; when giving their horses rest on their journeys, they instantly produce their cards, and are ready to stake anything. They are great eaters and drinkers, great smokers of tobacco, and extraordinarily fond of sleep. They are probably the most intelligent of the Siberian native tribes, though the Buryats are better educated."

18: Priklonski--82 [2] E-5 (no date) 1891 Yakut
116, 513, 761, 774

Sleep is the image of death. When the body is asleep, the soul has left him without, however, withdrawing too far. The same state may take place in cases of fainting fits, fever, and other diseases in which a man loses his conscience.

24: Wrangell--288-289 G-3 (1820-23) 1842 Yakut
116, 147, 513

"A Jakut, when travelling, wears only his usual in-door clothing, and at night spreads a horsecloth on the snow, which, with a saddle for his pillow, forms the whole of his bedding; his only covering being the fur jacket which he has worn during the day, and which he pulls off and puts over his back and shoulders, while the front of his body has scarcely anything to protect it, and is turned to the blazing fire. When he has lain for some time in this way, and feels so warm that he is near perspiring, he stops up his nose and ears with little bits of fur, and covers his face so as to leave only an exceedingly small aperture for breathing, and this is all that he requires in the most intense cold to keep from freezing during sleep. Even in Siberia the Jakuti are called iron men; and I do not believe that there are any other people in the world who can endure cold and hunger as they do. I have seen them frequently in the most intense cold of [289] this country, after the fire had long been extinguished, and when the light jacket had slipped off from their shoulders, sleeping completely exposed to the heavens, with scarcely any clothing on them, and their bodies covered with a thick coat of hoar-frost."